



Coastal, Climate, and Maritime Connections

SBMM Educational Programs



At the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, educational programming incorporates experiential learning outside the traditional classroom, going beyond the walls of the museum. Programs encourage curiosity and community outreach with special emphasis on California's maritime history and human interactions with the sea.

Students find it thrilling to embark on exciting and investigative experiences close to their homes and schools. These experiences provide them with a sense of adventure as they think about maritime connections in the natural environment. Exploring the local marine ecosystem allows students to significantly develop their knowledge and understanding of an individual's impact on the environment. A staff of seasoned educators passionate about experiential learning, environmental stewardship, and exploring the natural world, help students see that they are more capable than they imagined.

Immersive and meaningful outdoor experiences are powerful tools for lifelong impact and learning. SBMM programs are customizable based on age, grade, and skill level, with diverse excursions offered in a variety of locations as students are immersed in maritime history, coastal ecology, and marine science.



Whales are Superheroes! Saving the Planet One CO₂ Molecule at a Time

Whales Are Superheroes! Saving the Planet One CO₂ Molecule at a Time starts with an interactive lesson on whales, their ecological role in mitigating climate change, and the high diversity of species we have here in the Santa Barbara Channel. This is followed by a mixed-media whale art lesson and instruction with a local art educator. Whales serve as a gateway to caring about the environment and motivating people to think about our carbon footprint and climate change.



Maritime on the Move

A national award-winning program, Maritime on the Move provides immersive activities with locally trained naturalists. Countywide students are introduced to the unique oceanographic conditions that make the Santa Barbara Channel productive and bio-diverse. Local and global conservation success stories are shared, highlighting the comeback of wildlife that was on the brink of extinction. Students learn important ecological facts on why ocean health is critical to the sustainability of our planet and discuss tangible solutions that will empower them to be stewards of the sea.



Science Nights

Led by SBMM staff and volunteers, local Science Nights engage students with interactive maritime-themed activities as part of larger events hosted by schools and usually including other museums and science-related organizations. SBMM provides a science presentation, which includes a craft for students to complete and take home. Each presentation is based on an exhibit on view at SBMM, and students are provided with a family pass inviting them to the museum.



Girls in Ocean Science Conference

An annual event, the Girls in Ocean Science Conference connects female ocean experts and scientists with young women looking to explore ocean science-based fields of study and careers. The day-long conference brings together learning and mentorship through research conducted in labs and at sea aboard a local vessel. Participants come away with connections and resources that will empower them to continue their exploration and passion for the sea.



Marine Science

SBMM's Marine Science program takes students out to sea for a two-hour floating lab aboard a local vessel. Students explore the Santa Barbara Channel and experience coastal California as citizen scientists. Working in small groups, students participate in labs that include sampling water quality, observing marine invertebrates, studying plankton, and learning about oceanic food webs.



Tall Ship Program

Through the Tall Ship Program, students learn what life was like for merchant sailors of the 1800s, receiving a unique experience that cannot be matched in any classroom. Challenging hands-on activities allow students to hone their problem-solving, critical thinking, and communications skills — all while discovering the rich maritime heritage of the United States.



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Field Trips

Through the docent-led Field Trip program, students are led on a guided 90-minute tour of the museum and Santa Barbara's working harbor. Exhibits showcase 13,000 years of maritime history as well as human interaction with the Santa Barbara Channel and include Dwight Brooks ship models, commercial diving and surfing history, the first order Fresnel lens from the Point Conception Lighthouse, and more.

SBMM reaches broadly into the community in order to deliver as many educational opportunities as possible. Just last year, SBMM provided 183 programs to 4,801 students in 14 cities. Each year, with help from generous donors, sponsors, and foundations, SBMM is able to significantly expand its reach in the communities served.

SBMM's unique program offerings are tailored to meet the needs of each participating classroom, ensuring that class-specific needs and subject coverage for each grade level is introduced and reinforced. Outdoor experiential activities provide STEM and STEAM education and incorporate interactive discussions and science experimentation, assisting teachers with the need to integrate climate science and current environmental/ecological topics into classroom learning.

Through scholarships and discounts, SBMM programming brings equity and access to locally underserved students, creating social change by reducing historic barriers to coastal access and experiences.

For more information, please contact the SBMM Education Department at education@sbmm.org or (805) 456-8741.



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